

Organizations Seek 'Full Disclosure'

11/25/93

By George Lardner Jr.
Washington Post Staff Writer

Several journalistic and research organizations asked a special panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals here yesterday for "full disclosure" of independent counsel Lawrence E. Walsh's final report on the Iran-contra scandal.

The report was submitted to the special court under seal on Aug. 5, but those criticized in the three-volume document have been given until Dec. 3 to respond and reportedly seek suppression of at least some portions of it. Some sources have said it contains sharp criticisms of former presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush, among others.

The Society of Professional Journalists, the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the

Press and the National Security Archive asked that the report be released in full in an emergency motion filed with the three-judge panel, which is in charge of independent counsels.

Walsh is required by law to set forth "fully and completely" an account of his work, including both the disposition of the cases brought and "the reasons for not prosecuting any matter" within his jurisdiction during the 6½-year inquiry.

In voting last week to renew the independent counsel law, the Senate wiped out the provision permitting an explanation of why some cases were not prosecuted. Senate Minority Leader Robert J. Dole (R-Kan.), an outspoken critic of Walsh, sponsored the change, saying a special prosecutor such as Walsh should not be "blasting the very people he failed to convict." The House is not scheduled to act on the measure until next year.

of Final Iran-Contra Report

Walsh's investigation was effectively ended in December 1992 when Bush pardoned six former officials who had been involved in the scandal, including former defense secretary Caspar W. Weinberger, who was about to be tried on charges that he lied to Iran-contra investigators.

In their motion seeking full disclosure, the journalists and archivists noted that in granting the pardons, Bush stated Walsh "will have the opportunity to place his full assessment of the facts in the public record when he submits his final report." The independent counsel law says the court "may" release "such portions" of the final report that the special panel "deems appropriate."

The journalists and archivists contended that disclosure of the full report is essential to ensure public accountability, especially in light of the "still raging public debate" about

Walsh's \$35.7 million inquiry. "Only with full information can the members of the public judge for themselves the overall performance of the independent counsel and the adequacy and propriety of the investigation they financed," the motion said.

In a 1987 report on the law, the Senate said the court should consider "the right of the subjects of investigations to be shielded from publicity about unfounded or unfair allegations."

The journalists and archivists argued, however, that the subjects in the Iran-contra affair are already well known to the public and several of them, including Weinberger, former White House aide Oliver L. North, former secretary of state George P. Shultz and former attorney general Edwin Meese III, have written books giving their versions of what happened.